THE MAGIC LANTERN GAZETTE
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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Ralph Shape

Now that we are well into the New Year and the new century, the Society can be proud of its accomplishments. Its main achievement is the preservation of an art style which became the basis for most entertainment today. Whether you're just in it for the fun of collecting, you like pretty things, you entertain and educate with shows, you like to work at preservation, or you like to research history, all can be proud of the fact that future generations will view the magic lantern as an important part of their history.

It's important that history be recorded. Share your activities with other members by sending articles in for publication in the *Gazette*. Don't worry about being professional writers. Our editors have spent a lifetime in the school business and are quite capable of correcting spelling and punctuation.

This issue of the *Gazette*, again published on time, is in an abbreviated format to allow us to share this reprint with you. Printing and postage costs prohibit a double issue. This also permits our editors a brief respite from the rigors required of putting out their quality publication.

One issue of some concern is our website. As the world moves towards the Internet era, we will need to be a part of that aspect of communication. Our website has been primarily to introduce the Society to interested inquirers and to solicit their joining with us to preserve the hobby. It has been very successful from that standpoint. We owe a debt to Jack Judson for his help in creating and funding the site and in answering the numerous e-mails it invokes. Is it time to make changes? Some members have asked for improvements; additions to spice it up; features to draw returns to the site. All this takes time to create. Do we have the talent, time, and interest for a volunteer to be designated webmaster? Should we include Society history, lantern and slide information, links to other sites, member's ads, member's shows, and meeting schedules? Send us your thoughts and ideas. The more input we have the better the final product will become. I feel Jack is doing a marvelous job maintaining the site. Can we improve it without overburdening any individual? Please direct your responses to me at: 3757 So. 194th St., Seattle, WA 98188, or e-mail me at: RShape@compuserve.com.

Here it is already, 2001. I hope the 50 who volunteered to help Ed Lennert with the 2002 convention are planning their next year's activities around Rochester, New York.

May your lantern shine brightly throughout the year.

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SOCIETY LOSSES REPORTED

By Sue Hall

It is with great sadness that we report the deaths of two long-time Society members. Barbara Harris of Millis, Massachusetts died November 3, 2000. Professor Harris, along with her husband, John-Edward Hill, were charter members of The Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada. She was a member of the theater arts department at Brandeis University where she had taught since 1982. Barbara had also taught classes at Yale, Tufts, and Brown University, and was active in many theater groups.

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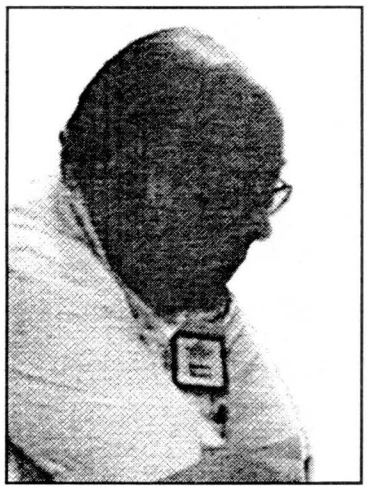
Barbara Harris



Harvey Becker

Also, on January 2, 2001, Harvey Becker passed away. He will be missed by Society members, but most especially by members of the Northwest Corner who spent many happy afternoons meeting at Harvey and Sharon's Vancouver, Washington home. Harvey taught art in Portland City schools until his recent retirement. In addition to collecting magic lanterns, Harvey was an excellent jeweler and many of us own magic lantern pins and pendants crafted by Harvey and sold at past conventions.

Our condolences go out to the families of both of these fine people.

EDITORS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE NEW FEATURE

By Tom Rall

I've been a generalist in the antiques and collectibles field for more than 25 years. I've done a lot of things: auctioneer, shop owner, show exhibitor. Sundays, ten months each year, I manage and also sell stuff at The Flea Market at Eastern Market, for which I can't resist a chance to get a free plug, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC.

Two of the things I hadn't done in the business were collect or specialize. Now I am doing both. For complicated reasons, both practical and fanciful, I have decided to become a collector and a dealer of photographic lantern slides. Probably like all obsessed collectors, I hope to become one of the foremost experts and eventually assemble a world class collection. Probably like all specialist dealers, particularly those in underexposed fields, I hope to participate in establishing the market and, eventually, to make some money.

I like to think I'm well on my way towards all these goals, but becoming a leading expert seems most readily obtainable. Though I purchased my first slides as recently as September 24, 1995, already I've been recognized as one of the only people in the United States seriously interested in the subject. Some of the leading photography dealers and auctioneers in the country have begun to make referrals to me. And now the editors of the premier related journal (the *Gazette)* have asked me to write a regular column for their quarterly! Believe me, I appreciate this opportunity. Because the field looks to be so broad, dozens of avenues of research beckon. Perhaps some readers will follow some of the roads and subsequently share ideas and discoveries about the subject, which we'll try to cover here. The field is so broad and the study so embryonic that basic questions seem unanswered: What, for instance, is a photographic lantern slide?

A definition is illusive. The elements probably: 1) a positive photographic image, 2) on glass, 3) for the purpose of projection. Such a definition would eliminate other types of positive photographic images that normally utilized glass in the finished product (such as the cased daguerreotype or ambrotype) or for other purposes (stereoscopic or back lighted formats for instance). And, of course it would eliminate the ubiquitous photographic negative on glass. But it would not entirely eliminate the autochrome, a process that produced a colored photographic positive image on glass that was sometimes used for projection. Nor would the definition satisfy other problems with color, that of the hand-tinted or hand-colored slides as opposed to those normally termed "black and white." Graduation of coloring could be further defined as well. The definition would eliminate positive images on film. But these were sandwiched between glass for protection in lantern slide projectors too!

The field of potential study seems so broad as to encompass more than a century of production, in various image sizes and formats, from as early as 1848 to as late as the 1960s, not counting reproductions, which are already in the market place, made last year.

I think it is safe to guess that millions of photographic lantern slides, however they are finally defined, were made from the negatives of thousands of photographers from all over the world. That they were also produced from

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Correspondence should be addressed to:

Bob and Sue Hall
3321 114th Street
Gig Harbor, WA 98332
Hm: 253-851-8566
email: rbtdhall@aol.com

Officers

President	Ralph Shape
Vice President	Homer Peabody
Secretary/Treasurer	Sharon Koch

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copy negatives made from other photographic prints or from different media entirely is, of course, another definitive problem. Fortunately much evidence of the production remains, not only in the actual surviving slides themselves but also in the ephemera of companies that made slides and the products for their production and use.

I'll begin to take a look at some of these topics in future columns. In the meantime, please feel free to write, call, or email about your interests and what you'd like to see covered. Tom Rall, 1101 N. Kentucky St., Arlington, VA 22205. 703-534-7612. Marketflea@aol.com.

MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY MINUTES OF THE NORTHWEST CORNER

October 22, 2000

Those present at the meeting held at Mike and Sharon Koch's were Alice Koch, Sue Hall, Ron and Dorothy Easterday, Larry Cederblom, Bob Doran, John and Betty Potter, and Ralph and Judie Shape.

After a noon lunch and much conversation, President Ralph called the meeting to order at 1:45. Minutes were read and corrected. Our convention ended up in the black, making $885 after expenses. Current membership is 148. Secretary Sharon was asked to send a thank you to the Silent Film Society for their attendance and participation in the convention.

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OPENING NIGHT

By Floyd Hagedorn

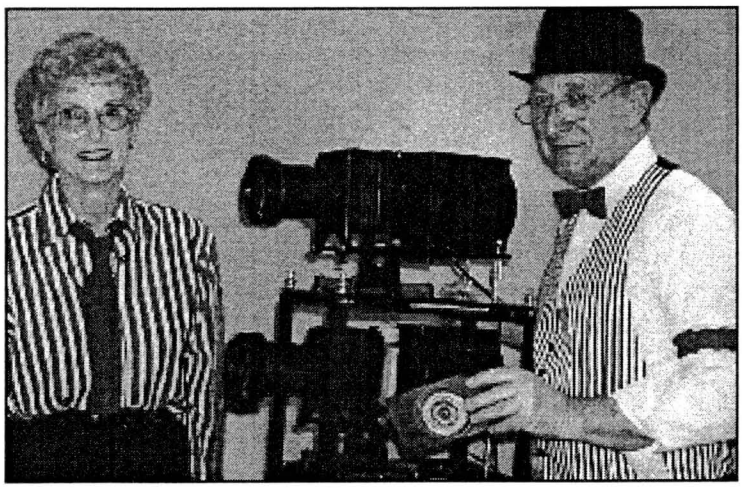
Projectors, slides and a screen were in their places just as we had rehearsed for many months. The tape machine was activated and the raucous honky tonk piano introduction to the "Circus" struck terror in our hearts for in exactly two minutes and twenty seconds we would become the center of attention. Could we motivate this audience to join the Magic Lantern program or would many wish they had not left their home and TV?

The guests closed conversations and found seats as the raucous music settled into a soft, lighthearted beat. By the second chorus we lost our tension and began to limber up. The carefree honky tonk piano grew to a crescendo as did our adrenaline. We were strutting around the projectors and then the music ended! Terror struck!

Ladies and gentlemen let's have a big hand for Lenna Nimblefingers and her spirited rendition of "The Circus!" It is truly amazing! Her hands gracefully fly across the keyboard and you will note that never once, do her fingers leave her hands! By the way Lenna, "What instrument were you playing today?"

"The tape recorder," bellowed Lenna.

Isobar is the name! Professor C.D. Isobar. My friends call me "Seedy" for short but I don't care what you call me . . . as long as it is not late for dinner! Welcome to our "first ever" . . . and maybe "last ever" . . . Magic Lantern Show!



The projectors are genuine early 20th century vintage, especially modified to accommodate magic lantern techniques.

We will project images from the 18th and 19th centuries as well as some constructed just last week! Hand painted, lithographic, photographic, and transparency views from three centuries! Still and animated subjects including historical events, travel, comic, and informational views presented magic lantern fashion!

Thus our lanternist careers were launched. A few slides illustrating the techniques and capabilities of the lantern were followed by slides depicting Great Grandpa's life as an immigrant missionary on the western frontier in the mid and late 1800s. (This presentation at St. John Lutheran Church for its members, members of the Oregon-Jerusalem Historical Society and Grandpa's descendants honored the beginning of his work here 138 years ago.)

Meanwhile baseball had become popular and a stirring rendition of "Casey At The Bat" provided "a serious piece of humor" from Grandpa's time. No lantern show about these times would be complete without an admonition to the "weaker among us" concerning the evils of strong drink. A few closing slides and what we approached with apprehension has turned to a pleasurable experience we wish to repeat. We were able to motivate this audience to join the magic lantern program.

After twenty years of procrastination we offer these words of encouragement to those working toward their first performance:

* Pick your first audience carefully. A small group of people you know will ease your tensions.
* Know your equipment. Malfunctioning slide changers, wrong side up picture, and lighting the wrong lantern are not life threatening, but embarrassing.
* Know your material. Embarrassing moments are best filled with spontaneous humor fitting the occasion.
* Be lighthearted, it is much easier than a serious program. As all wood workers know, "stain and varnish hide a multitude of sins." So to, a humorous presentation will hide a multitude of embarrassments.
* After the program, be prepared for all manner of questions and comments. Our favorite comment was, "Dad, I didn't know you had it in you!"

Minutes of the Northwest Corner continued

Sue read an email from member Erkki Huhtamo, who has moved from Finland and is now Professor at UCLA Department of Design Media Arts. He requested that we ask in the *Gazette* for anyone who could sell him a complete wheel for his new acquisition, a Pettibone Peacock lantern. He has also written a convention report for the British society's newsletter.

The procedure for election of society officers was discussed, with emphasis on the assured privacy of ballot voting. This will be addressed at the next election.

Sue also asked about where we could direct interested persons or prospective members for information on magic lanterns. Ralph will ask Jack Judson about the possibility of creating a link to the British Society, Terry Borton, and Henry Clark's websites. Bob Doran asked how much it costs to run the website. We also talked about having a society officer run the website after Jack retires from the job. Larry and Dorothy suggested forming a committee to define a webmaster's duties. Members of the committee are Ralph, Ron and Dorothy Easterday, and Larry Cederblom. They will meet on the Internet and have some results to report by next meeting. Ralph will ask for input from the membership.

Ralph posed a question about how we should recognize deceased society founder Joe Koch. Alice suggested an award be given to a convention presenter of an historical program, since one of Joe's first loves was history. She suggested that a book could be the prize. Sue suggested that we could put the Vice President in charge of formulating the award criteria.

Larry received an email from Harvey Becker, who extended his condolences about Joe and said he would not be able to attend the meeting. Also, Marvin Nauman has a new address in Gig Harbor, which is: 5102 19th Street NW.

Sue received an email from Steve Tobin, who has joined the society. He bought 10,000 slides and creates glass houses with slide themes such as flowers, trees, landscapes, or native cultures.

The annual gift to the members will be the first half of the booklet "Motion Picture Machines, Magic Lantern Films/Slides, Serpentine and Cloak Effects," with the last half to be next year's present!

Next year's hosts/hostesses will be:
January 28 – Bob and Sue Hall
May 20 – Bob Bishop (alternative Ron and Dorothy Easterday)
August 12 – Ralph and Judie Shape
November 4 – Marvin Nauman (alternative Sharon and Mike Koch)

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 and we went downstairs to view new acquisitions and slide presentations by Larry, Ron, Ralph, and Bob.

Submitted by Sharon Koch, Secretary

BITS AND PIECES

1 Bill Carroll, long time society member and book dealer, is now on the web. Go to ACRPhtographica.com to find a list of approximately 40 books currently for sale. All are magic lantern and optical toy related. For those of you sans computer, contact Bill at 8500 La Entrada Ave., Whittier, CA 90605, or call him at 562-693-8421 to get a current book list.

2 Directory Correction: Erkki Huhtamo, who is seeking a complete slide wheel for his projector can be reached at UCLA Department of Design Media Arts. 1300 Dickson Art Center, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1456. Office, 310-206-2374, erhuhta@ucla.edu (Please note corrected email address.)

3 Impress your friends and neighbors with that modern marvel, the Magic Lantern. Ron and Dorothy Easterday reported a 300% increase in trick-or-treaters this Halloween. How did they do it? Inspired by Larry Cederblom's scary slides at the October NW corner meeting, they rear-projected an image of the Wicked Witch of the West out their second floor bedroom window. "Our house is uphill from the street," Dorothy explained, "so it really has good visibility. Last year we saw lots of little trick-or-treaters standing at the bottom of the driveway that didn't bother to walk up the hill to the house, even though we had lights on. That six foot diameter Wicked Witch shining out the window really attracted attention. My only regret is that there was hardly any candy leftover for me!"

4 Congratulations to Elgin and Dorothy Smith who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on November 28, 2000. Dorothy reports Elgin's health has improved with new treatments he has been receiving.

THE COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE – JANUARY 1897

From the Collection of
Sharon Koch

The kinetoscope has for some years been a familiar object. It was the successor of the zoetrope. The production of roll films, due to the demand of the amateur photographer for a compact, portable means of making many exposures without recourse to a darkroom, made it possible. A series of pictures is made in rapid succession on a long strip of sensitive celluloid film. When a print or transparency is made from this band of negatives and caused to pass before the eye rapidly, the motion of the original is reproduced. That is, in the negative band there is a series of separate pictures, each individual picture portraying the object at a given fraction of a second. These, when passed rapidly through the viewing instrument, give to the eye the sensation of one picture in which the objects pass through the same motions as the original subjects. The exhibition of such pictures on a small scale in the kinetoscope was a comparatively simple matter. Defects were hardly noticeable. The projection of these pictures on the screen, however, was attended with no little difficulty. Here the picture is enlarged to life size, and all the defects are glaringly apparent. Better films, better negatives, more accurate register, and a dozen other things became necessary. Today, however, these difficulties have been very largely overcome, and the animated photographs are extremely popular. From the historian's point of view much has been gained. The perfection of the phonograph and the vitascope gives us a means of preserving for posterity an absolutely accurate record of important events.

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